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MINUTES

XI.

OF THE

Charleston Baptist Association,

Convened in the Town of Camden, S. C. 4th Nov. 1820.

1st. The Saturday and Sabbath were, as usual, employed in acts of public devotion ; two sermons being delivered on each day, and a lecture in the evening. In the morning of the Sabbath Rev. Dr. Furman delivered the Missionary Sermon from Mark 6, v. 16, after which a collection was made in favour of the fund. Rev. Mr. Rice preached in the afternoon. The Lord's Supper was administered. Rev. Mr. Johnson preached in the evening. The congregation was moderately large, and appeared seriously attentive to the solemnities of the day.

2d. On Monday, at 11 o'clock A. M. the Association Sermon was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Roberts, from 1st. Cor. 12, v. 27, *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*

3d. Dr. Furman prayed at the opening of business. Letters from 26 Churches were read, the names of their Delegates enrolled, and the state of each Church, according to the returns made, minutted.

4th. Elected Rev. Dr. Furman, Moderator, and Rev. Joseph B. Cook, Clerk.

5th. Received a petition from the Sumterville Baptist Church, (recently a branch of the High Hills Church under the pastoral care of the Rev. Dr. Roberts, and constituted by the Rev. Messrs. Johnson, Compere and Cook, on the 15th October last) by their Delegates, brethren John B. Miller and Frederic Brown, requesting admission into this body ; which request was unanimously granted.

6th. The Rev. Mr. Rice, Agent of the Board of Commissioners of the Baptist Convention of the United States, being present, was invited to a seat in the Association ; who gave an account of the Foreign and Domestic Mission, according to the most recent intelligence received ; also of the state of the Theological Seminary, and of the progress made in erecting the building at Washington ; twenty-one youth are now students ; the third story of the building is nearly carried up.

7th. Agreed to invite the Rev. Mr. Joice, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in this town, to seat with us ; also Rev. Messrs. Mathis and Hill, of the Methodist Society, residents in the town.

8th. Read letters from Corresponding Associations, viz. -- From the Bethel, a letter with minutes, by their messengers, Rev. Messrs. John Rooker and John McCreary--the Edgefield a letter, and minutes of the last year, by our brother Abner Blöcker--the Cape Fear, a letter and minutes of the year 1819, by Rev. Job Goodman--the Pee Dee, a letter by brethren Rev. Daniel White and Patrick Dowd--the Moriah, a letter by our brethren Rev. Charles Ingram and Lewis Braker--the New-Jersey, a letter and minutes of the present year, by our brother Thomas C. Gillison, Esq.--from the Warren, Philadelphia and Boston, their minutes and corresponding letter of the year 1819--the Hudson River, minutes of 1818, 1819 and 1820--the Georgia, a letter and minutes of the last year--from the Saluda, a letter and minutes--the Savannah River, a letter and minutes of the year 1818--from the Sandy River and Neuse, no accounts.

9th. Read the Address from the Board of Managers of the Baptist General Convention of the United States, directed to this body.

Rev. Mr. White prayed--adjourned to Tuesday, at half past nine o'clock.

Tuesday morning--Met pursuant to adjournment--Rev. Mr. Dossey prayed.

10th. Received a printed appeal, addressed to this Association by Mr. John W. Wilkins, which was referred to the committee appointed the last year to examine into his alleged grievance.

11th. Appointed the brethren Roberts, Dossey and Inglesby, a committee to examine the minutes of Corresponding Associations, respecting subjects of general concern.

12th. Read the minutes of the last year, and distributed those received from Corresponding Associations.

13th. Read the Address from the last Triennial Convention, held in Philadelphia in April last, together with the plan adopted to produce concert in raising and applying funds for Education and Missionary purposes; and for the establishment and government of the Theological College. The Moderator informed the Association that his colleague Rev Mr. Dossey and himself had attended according to appointment. To which was added an account of the views, spirit and proceedings of that venerable body: whereupon it was agreed; That this Association have a high sense of the importance and usefulness of the measures adopted by the Convention, and are disposed to promote them to the best of their ability.

14th. Took into consideration the formation of the State Convention, proposed at our last meeting. Upon inquiry it appeared, that the Associations in the interior of the State, who had received the Address from this body, on the subject of said Convention, had not adopted the plan proposed; but some of them had referred it to the Churches; and the Churches in another appeared to favour it: Therefore, agreed, That one thousand copies of the Address be printed, and that the following brethren be requested to visit the Churches connected in the different Associations in this State, viz: brother Dossey, the Churches in the Moriah Association; brother Johnson, those in the Edgefield and Bethel Association; and that our brother Todd, messenger to the Savannah River Association, present the Address to that body.

16th. Received the report of the Chairman of the Board for Domestic Missions:—Whereupon, it appeared, that the Rev. Messrs. King, Brooks and Johnson had been appointed to itinerate in various parts of the State, during the past year; that they had made considerable collections for the fund, and that there was reason to believe their ministry had been the means of doing much good.

17th. Read the Circular Letter prepared by the Clerk, and committed it for revision to the following brethren, in conjunction with the author, viz Roberts, Furman and Johnson.

18th. Appointed the following brethren to write to corresponding Associations, viz. Roberts, to the Warren, Boston, New-Jersey, Philadelphia and Hudson River; Johnson to the Bethel; Todd to the Georgia; Compere to the Edgefield; Good to the Hephzibah; Edwards to the Moriah; M'Iver to the Savannah River; Hodges to the Pee Dee; Cook to the Sandy River; Dossey to the Cape Fear; Furman to the Saluda; Cuttino to the Neuse; and the following brethren messengers, viz Cook and Compere to the Bethel; Dr Roberts to the Edgefield; Todd and Gillison to the Savannah River; Copeland to the Pee Dee and Sandy Creek; Dossey to the Moriah; M'Kay to the Cape Fear; Inglesby to the Philadelphia, New-Jersey and Hudson River.

19th. Agreed, that the subject of the next Circular Letter be the following, "How may the christian distinguish between the directions of the Holy Spirit, in matters relative to duty, and his own inclinations, so as to be able to form a just conclusion?" Appointed Rev. W. B. Johnson to write it.

20th. Query, from the Church at the High Hills of Santee. Would it not be advisable to adopt a judicious plan, for uniting the influence and efforts of respectable persons in Baptist Congregations, who are not members, to those of the Church, in conducting the business which respects Congregational and public interests, without their interfering in the purely spiritual concerns of the Church; and in a manner that might be friendly, conciliating and agreeable to them, consistent with religious principles and propriety, for the interest of the Churches, and for the glory of God? Answered in the affirmative.

21st. The following resolution was proposed from the Chair, and unanimously adopted. *Resolved*, That this Association contemplate with mixed emotions of regret and pleasure, the death of the Rev. Edmund Botsford, A. M. late Pastor of the Church in Georgetown, standing in their immediate communion—regret for the departure of so excellent and faithful a servant of God from the Church militant, where aid in the cause of God is so much needed, in which through the blessings of God, who owned him for his servant in the gospel, his services were rendered eminently useful—pleasure, and even joy, from the consideration that he has passed through the painful scenes of heavy affliction, which he sustained for a course of years in the latter part of his life; that he supported with purity and dignity his christian profession, and ministerial character to the end, and at the advanced age of seventy-five years, died in faith and in peace, triumphing in his Redeemer's complete salvation; and that his brethren who loved him, and must ever acknowledge his worth, have reason to believe, that he is now crowned with glory and immortality in the heavens, enjoying the ineffable pleasures which are comprehended in the beatified vision, and full enjoyment of God and the Lamb to eternity.

The Association sincerely sympathize with the bereaved Church, mourning family, and numerous friends of their deceased, excellent brother.

22d. The Church at the Twenty-five Mile Creek having asked dismissal, in order to join the Bethel Association; the subject was considered, and they were requested to reconsider the subject, as there appeared to be reasons of common interest against it

23d. Agreed that the next session of the Association be at the Congaree Church: appointed the following brethren to preach on that occasion Mr. Dossey to preach the Association Sermon, in case of failure Mr. Compere; Mr. Todd to commence the service on Saturday, in case of failure, Mr. Good; Mr. Johnson to preach the Missionary Sermon.

24th. The Moderator received direction to address a letter of thanks to the Masonic Lodge or Lodges in Camden, through the proper officer, for their very kind and friendly behavior, in giving the use of their commodious Hall to the Association during the session; by which means the Church has been kept open for public worship, while business was transacting.

Rev. Mr. Joice prayed, and the Association adjourned until to-morrow at half past ten o'clock.

Met pursuant to adjournment. Dr. Roberts prayed.

25th. Read and approved the letters directed to be written to Corresponding Associations.

26th. Dr. Roberts reported on the Circular Letter, that the committee had made a few verbal alterations, and had advised the author to now modify the latter part of it, which would require time; in which state they recommended its adoption.—Concurred in.

27th. Dr. Furman reported respecting the Columbia Church, in the case of Mr. Wilkins, that the committee found that it was too complex and extensive to be investigated and brought to a decision in any portion of time they could devote to it during the session, and recommended that it be laid over for future consideration and be recommitted. In this report the Association concurred, and appointed the same committee to transact the business, with the exception of Mr. Compere in the room of Dr. Furman, who could not attend; three to be a quorum.

28th. Appointed for a day of Public Humiliation and Prayer, connected with Thanksgiving, the second Wednesday in May; when the Churches are exhorted, with all that are connected with them, or are disposed to unite in the solemn transaction, to assemble in the Divine presence and humble themselves before the Lord; to cultivate the spirit of repentance and reformation in an ingenuous confession and sorrow for sin, with a hearty forsaking of it; to deprecate the Divine judgment and wrath; to implore sovereign mercy, on themselves, their country, the churches of the Saints and all mankind; and especially, to pray that the spirit may be poured out from on high in plentiful effusion on the Churches, Ministers and hearers of the Gospel; till the desert become as a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be as a forest: And that grateful acknowledgements be made for the blessings of providence, and grace bestowed on an unworthy and unthankful people.

29th. Voted, the thanks of the Association to the Inhabitants of Camden, for the hospitality, kindness and respect they have manifested toward this body, in inviting them to hold this session among them; in providing liberally for their accommodation; in treating them with the utmost civility, and in giving serious and respectful attendance on the word and ordinances during the whole session.

30th. *Resolved*, That as some alterations in the Address to the Associations about to be printed, on the subject of the State Convention, may be useful and proper, its revision for this purpose, be confided to the Moderator.

31st. Collected money for printing the Minutes and Address, and requested the Moderator to superintend this business as usual.

Rev. Mr. Johnson's prayer, and the benediction being pronounced by the Moderator, the Association adjourned, in expectation of meeting again on the Saturday before the fifth Lord's day in November next.

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE.

1st The following Delegates appeared—FURMAN, COOK, DOSSEY, ROBERTS, JOHNSON, TODD, GOOD, COMPERE, HILL, RHAME, CUTTINO, EDWARDS, INGLESBY, MILLER, FOUNTAIN, and GOODWIN.

2d. Elected Officers—RICHARD FURMAN, President; DAVID ADAMS, Treasurer; JOHN M. ROBERTS, Recording Secretary; JOSIAH B. FURMAN, Corresponding

Secretary, JAMES HARPER, JOSEPH WHILDEN, JOHN RILEY and ROBERT BRADIE, Jun. Assistants

3d. Agreed to send Five Hundred Dollars to the General Convention, to aid in the support of the Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

4th. Agreed to assist G. Rollins in the attainment of useful knowledge for the ministry provided he is approved by the Board for the Home Mission, who are authorised to examine him, and determine what appropriations should be made in his favor.

5th. Agreed that all necessary business be referred to the Special Committee, during the recess of this body.

6th. Took an account of the collections and state of the Funds, and found them as follows:—

	<i>Education Fund.</i>		<i>Missionary Fund.</i>
Charleston	\$218 25	Aux. M. & E. S.	\$112
		W & E. M. S.	350
Welsh Neck	10 00	Juvenile Fem. A. S.	67 50
		A M. S.	52
Ebenezer Female M. S.	6 00	Juvenile M. S.	42
High Hills	16 00		*15 50
Georgetown	\$50 00		
Fe Education S. of do	92 50	Female M. S.	16
Mount Pisgah	6 00		37 56½
Mechanicville	23 25		
Columbia	17 00		20 00
Camden	7 00		6 00
Piedmont	4 00		54 50
Four Holes	10 00		10 00
Calvaray	2 50		7 00
Collection of the Association	32 50		6 75
Sumterville	23 25		2 50
Swift Creek Congregation	9 37½	Wassamsaw	32 50
Three Creeks	3 00	Amelia Township	8 00
	517 37½	Black Creek	10 00
Deduct Charleston collection included in the Treasurer's acc't.	218 25	Beulah	3 00
		Elim	3 37½
		Sugar Creek A. M. S.	3 25
			29 30
			916 73½
Amount of Funds in the hands of the Treasurer	299 12½		
Specialties, Cash, &c.	7,917 44		
Expenditure this year	\$32 90		
	8,216 56½		

RICHARD FURMAN, *President*,
JOHN M. ROBERTS, *Secretary*.

* To Educate a Heathen Child in the Christian Faith at Rangoon, or elsewhere.

Abstract from the Account of the Treasurer of the Board, for directing the Home Mission.—Rev. William Dossey.

		<i>Dr.</i>
1820		
Nov. 3	To balance in Fund last Nov	\$712 00
	To Contributions from Churches and Societies this year, High Hills Santee, \$40; Cheraw Union Meeting, 39 72; Sumterville, 34; Four Holes, 6 75; Wassamsaw, 5;	125 47
	To collections of Missionaries; Rev. Mr. Brooks, \$180 92; Rev. W. B. Johnson, 86 87½; Rev. Wm. King, 39 40	307 19½
	To interest on a loan	3 50
		1147 16½
1820		<i>Cr.</i>
Nov. 3	By cash paid Rev. Ivey Walk, for Missionary Services, \$35; by do Rev. J. L. Brooks, for do, 212 57; by do Rev. W. B. Johnson's expenses in do, 35; by do Rev. Wm. King, for services on do, 105;	387 51
	In Fund	759 67½

State of the Churches.

The Ordained Ministers Names are in Capitals ; Licensed Preachers in Italics. From Churches distinguished by an Asterisk (*) we have no accounts, and their numbers stand as they did last year. Pastors and Messengers to whose names an Obelisk (†) is affixed, did not attend ; a Dash (—) denotes a vacancy.

CHURCHES.	MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS.	Baptized.	Rec. by Letter	Dismissed.	Excommunicated	Restored	Dead	Number of Members.
Charleston,	RICHARD FURMAN, Wm. Inglesby,	39	4	13	5	4	14	724
Welsh Neck,	WM DOSSEY, E M'Iver, P. Edwards	43	3	3	5	3	4	224
Ebenezer,	JOHN GOOD, T Dargan,† J Morris	0	7	0	2	0	5	88
High Hills,	JOHN M. ROBERTS, John Monk	13	0	28	0	0	5	297
Cheraw Hill,	— John White,† John Thomas,†	2	1	1	0	0	1	180
Beauty Spot,*	DANIEL M'KAY,†							27
Mount Pisgah,	JOSEPH B COOK, Jesse Peebles,	0	0	0	2	0	3	38
Lower F L Creek	JOHN KENNINGTON, David Kelly,	0	0	7	2	1	0	54
Little Pedee,*	—,							69
Georgetown,	—, Aaron Marvin,† Peter Cuttino,	48	8	0	0	0	2	209
Gapway,*	—,							26
Congaree,	—, David Powell,	29	0	0	1	2	2	130
Black Creek,	—, David Goodwin, T. Chambliss,†	1	6	7	2	1	0	78
Three Creeks.	JOSEPH F COPELAND, C. Stubbs,†	10	2	3	1	0	2	51
Wassamsaw,	—, Thomas Burbridge,	0	0	1	0	0	2	41
Muddy Creek,*	—,							9
Catfish,*	—,							45
Bculab,	GEORGE SCOTT,† Wm Tucker,	4	0	0	0	0	3	151
Terrel's Bay,*	WILLIAM PALMER,†							46
25 Mile Creek.	ASA BELL, Alexander Crumpton,	1	2	1	0	0	1	89
Amelia Township,	WILLIAM PAULING,†	0	1	8	2	0	3	138
Elim L. Creek,	S TIMMONS,† J Timmons, T Lee,	3	1	2	0	0	0	95
Columbia,	{ W B JOHNSON, R. M. TODD, { Nicholas Hodges.	39	1	13	0	0	0	155
Camden,	—, Wm Cook, John Smith,	1	2	0	0	0	1	32
Calvary,	BRADLEY RHAME, J. Rhame,†	0	0	1	3	0	1	72
Piedmont,	HILLSMAN HILL Silvanus Stokes,	8	2	0	2	0	0	75
Bethel,	L COMPERE, W. Holmes, J Pack,	1	0	0	0	0	0	78
Goose Creek,*	—,	9	0	0	0	0	1	99
Mount Olivet,*	—,							34
New Providence.*	CHARLES WILLIAMS,†							45
Colonel's Creek,	WILLIAM HARRIS, John Oquin,†	7	2	12	2	1	0	66
Four Holes,	JACOB BLAIR,† M. Riley, J Smith,	1	2	5	0	0	2	123
Mechanic Ville,	J. ELLIS,† A. Fountain, J Fountain,	24	2	5	0	0	2	212
High Hill Creek,*	GEORGE KING,*							20
Friendship,*	—,							18
Lake Swamp,	—, G. Collins,† G Morris, L. Rollins,	8	0	0	1	0	0	29
Sumterville.	—, John B. Miller,							34
Increase in the return of Members this year,		291	46	110	28	12	34	3900

but some Churches have returned more than they have accounted for, and the Number of one Church was left out of the calculation last year.

THE
CIRCULAR LETTER.

*The CHARLESTON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, to the Churches
they represent, send Christian salutation.*

DEAR BRETHREN,

FOR many years past your attention has been directed, by our Circular Letters, to very important and interesting subjects. That on which we now address you, is of this character, involving, not only the happiness of pious individuals, who may wish to connect themselves to the visible Church; but, also, the fellowship of our Churches. It is to be lamented that sufficient attention has not always been paid to the reception of members into our community; in consequence of which many have been received, the general tenor of whose life, afterwards, has proved that they were unworthy of a name and place in the church of Christ. Thus, open transgressions, animosities, divisions and excommunications have followed, and the Church has been reproached by the world, on account of these things. Surely then, it behoves every Church to be very particular in the reception of candidates applying for membership. On this account, and to afford a clue, by which you may be assisted, in this important business, the following subject has been proposed, to which we would invite your serious and impartial attention, viz:—

“What qualifications are essentially requisite for union with the visible Church of Jesus Christ; and how are these qualifications to be manifested to his Church, by applicants for membership?” May the Great Head of the Church direct us in the investigation of the subject, that a satisfactory answer may be given, which may tend to encourage the truly pious applicant, and direct the professed and faithful followers of the Lamb, so that all difficulties may be removed, and the way made plain, for an union between them, on the principles of the gospel!

Our subject is naturally divided into two parts, viz:—1st. What qualifications are requisite for union with the visible Church?”—and—

2dly.—How are these to be manifested by applicants for membership?” We shall consider each of them according to the order in which they stand.

1st.—The requisite qualifications.

The visible Church of Jesus Christ should consist of those who have been born again—who have experienced repentance for sin, and attained evangelical faith. Such have been translated from darkness to light, and from under the power of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Therefore, as there can be no communion or fellowship, between light and darkness; between Christ and Belial; between those who have been born of the Spirit and those who have been born of the flesh, or in a state of unregeneracy; so it becomes absolutely necessary that every candidate, for admission into the Church, should experience a radical change of the heart and life. This change occupies a large space in christian

experience, and may be comprehended under the following particulars, viz :—Conviction for sin; repentance towards God, including godly sorrow for sin, and thorough reformation; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; obedience to the divine commands, proceeding from love to God and the dear Redeemer; and love to the people of God.

An elucidation of these particulars will present to the mind the qualifications essentially requisite for union with the visible church of Jesus Christ.

1st.—Conviction. It is generally acknowledged that man, by nature, is a sinner and, as such, under the curse of God's most just and holy law. But the unenlightened sinner is ignorant of his real character. He is too apt to consider himself "rich, and increased in goods," not knowing that he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked." In this state he continues till awakened from his delusion by the Spirit of God, who is the great agent, in the economy of grace, to convince "the world" of sin. The poor, wretched sinner, were it not for his sovereign influence, would remain ignorant of his lost estate. He would never seek after God. In order, therefore, that he may be brought to the knowledge of himself, the Spirit employs various means to convince him of sin, and to enlighten his mind to perceive the awful precipice, on which he stands, while fiery billows, of divine wrath, roll below. The usual means are the Holy Scriptures, the preaching of the Gospel, the dispensations of Divine Providence, &c. But the Spirit is not confined to means; he, at times, works directly on the heart and understanding, and thus brings the sinner to the discovery of himself. Some have been so secretly, yet effectually, wrought upon, that they have not known in what manner, or when, the change has been effected. They can only say, with the man whom Christ restored to sight, "whereas I was blind, now I see." Others have known the Lord from a state of childhood; they, therefore, are ignorant of the commencement of the work of grace on the heart. Such was Samuel, under the former, and, probably, Timothy under the present dispensation. But, generally, as we have stated, the Holy Spirit works by means. Ask the people of God how they were convinced of sin, and some will tell you that a powerful sermon first arrested their attention, and brought them to see what poor, wretched and sinful beings they were; others, that by reading the sacred Scriptures, or some pious author, perhaps a sermon or a tract, they were led to an understanding of their awful state. Some have been stopt, in the midst of their sinful career, by an alarming providence, such as the death of a near relative or friend. To which we may add, that the Spirit of God often makes use of the ordinances of the gospel as a means of producing conviction in the mind of the sinner, thus proving them to be of divine appointment.

Conviction for sin is generally attended by a deep sense of the purity of the divine law, as emanating from an infinitely pure and holy God. This law takes cognizance not only of outward actions, but also of the thoughts and intents of the human heart. Convinced of sin, therefore, the awakened sinner now dreads the penalty of the law. He views himself in an awful situation. If he looks up to Heaven he beholds the Divine Majesty arrayed in terrors. If he

endeavors to keep the law, he finds it impossible ; he perceives that he comes short in every requisition ; while justice, the guardian of God's moral government, presents his two edged sword, ready to inflict the threatened punishment. Can there be a more awful condition than this ? Sin now appears exceeding sinful, and the sinner laments that he ever dared to sin against God. This leads us to the consideration of the second part of christian experience, viz :—

2d.—Repentance towards God proceeding from unfeigned sorrow for sin. Repentance, in its general acceptation, may be defined, distress and trouble for the calamities procured by sin. In this sense Cain, Ahab, and Judas repented. Yet we do not find that the tenor of their life was altered. They continued in sin, as their conduct evinced ; particularly Judas, who, after he had betrayed his innocent Lord, went and hanged himself. Thus, the men of the world, now, after having committed some error affecting their temporal concerns, profess to repent of it ; that is, they are sorry for having done any thing injurious to their worldly interest.

A particular, or evangelical repentance, may be defined that change which takes place in the mind, after being convinced of sin by the Spirit of God, and is attended by genuine, heart-felt sorrow, on account of it, as having been committed against a holy, good God, and the best interests of the soul. Previously to this change the sinner delighted in sin, or spared it ; it was agreeable to his nature ; he rioted in the pleasures of sin ; he delighted in sinful company ; he was advancing with rapid strides down to the chambers of death, unmindful of his duty to God, and of the awful consequences attendant on a life of transgression. But now he has been made to halt—to pause—to consider, and reflect on himself. What is the consequence ? He has tasted the bitterness of sin—the wormwood and the gall ; it is, therefore, no longer agreeable to him ; but, on the contrary, exceedingly painful and distressing. No longer do the pleasures of sin yield him any satisfaction. No, every recollection of them wounds his soul afresh. His sinful companions and pleasures are forsaken, as broken cisterns which can afford no cooling draught to the thirsty soul. Neither can he progress in the road to ruin.—He fears the consequences ; he anticipates the end, even death, eternal death. He is now brought to confess that he is a sinner ; and, in the bitterness and anguish of his soul, he exclaims, “against thee, O Lord, have I sinned and done evil in thy sight :”—Or, with the repenting Publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”—He is overwhelmed with shame at the recollection of his past sins and follies. They now present themselves in dreadful array before him, and condemn him before God. He feels conscious that he merits not the Divine forgiveness. Grief takes possession of his soul, while floods of penitential sorrow flow down his cheeks. Such is the deep distress, which some experience, that they forget to eat bread, and their nights are spent in agonizing cries and groans. They fear to close their eyes lest they should awake in Hell. Others are induced to believe that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that they are doomed to everlasting destruction, and hence, under the temptation of the adversary of souls, they determine to lay violent hands

on themselves that they may know at once the full extent of their punishment. O! awful state of keen despair. Thus, as the darkest part of the night is just before the dawning of the day, so it is with the penitent sinner: The time of his deepest distress becomes the time of God's gracious opportunity to manifest the riches of his grace and mercy. The Holy Spirit, who has convinced the soul of sin and led to repentance, will not leave his work unfinished, but will carry it on to perfection. Hear the language of the Apostle Paul, who speaks with holy confidence, on this subject: "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." We now behold the awakened sinner trembling under fearful apprehensions of the wrath of God, panting for deliverance from under the weight and burden of his sins, and ready to despair of relief. In this gloomy, deplorable state, the heavenly comforter comes to his assistance. He finds the subject of his influence cut off from all dependance on himself, and crushed into the very dust before God, under the weight of his guilt. He now kindly raises him from the depths of despair and wretchedness, and points him to the only deliverer and Saviour of helpless sinners. "Behold," saith he, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The sinner, perhaps, previously to this had heard of the name of Jesus; he had heard of what he had done and suffered, in order to save the lost; he had also heard of his willingness, as well as of his ability to save them; but he had never previously to this, felt *his* need of an interest in this Saviour. He now realizes, in his own experience, *his* particular need of Christ. He looks towards Calvary and there beholds an agonized Saviour,—he contemplates with wonder, the costly sacrifice—he views salvation completed by the obedience, death and resurrection of the Son of God. This leads us to the consideration of the third requisite qualification in christian experience, viz: .

3d.—Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an absolutely necessary requisite, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." The poor helpless condemned sinner is now encouraged to draw near to Christ. He beholds him altogether lovely, and drawn by the silken cords of God's everlasting love, he is now enabled to extend the hand of faith, and to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ as the only foundation of his hope of acceptance with God, and in so doing, obtains rest and peace to his soul. "Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." O! what joy now thrills through his soul. Being delivered from the burden of his sins, he is borne as on eagle's wings, towards heaven. He no longer views God as angry with him, but, through Christ, his peace-maker, he views him as a reconciled God and Father, and receiving from above the spirit of adoption, he now cries, "Abba Father." In a word, the sinner is now born again and made a new creature in Christ Jesus. "All old things are past away, behold, all things are become new!" While contemplating this wonderful change, his joyful soul is made to express his gratitude in fervent prayer to God, and in songs of praise for delivering mercy. With holy fervor he sings:—

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
 Wandering from the fold of God,
 He to save my soul from danger,
 Interposed his precious blood.
 O! to grace how great a debtor,
 Daily I'm constrained to be!
 Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
 Bind my wand'ring heart to thee!"

We shall conclude this part of the subject with the following quotation from Mason's Meditations. "St. John lays down this infallible rule, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.' This is a simple plain truth. Am I born of God? This must be answered by inquiring, do I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed Son of God to the office of a Saviour, for lost and perishing sinners? Does this truth enter into my heart and mind? Is it received and believed as a matter which can alone bring relief to my guilty conscience, peace to my troubled mind, and hope to my dejected spirit? If so, I do believe in Jesus—he is the object of my faith and the hope of my heart. I am born again, born of God, born to see, to enter into, and enjoy the kingdom of God."

Another requisite qualification is—

4th.—Obedience to the divine commands, evincive of love to God and the dear Redeemer. Obedience to the divine commands is strongly evincive of love to Christ, who has said, "If ye love me keep my commandments; and again, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth us." If therefore, the love of Christ be shed abroad in the heart, obedience to the divine commands will follow as the natural consequence or effect of this love. The believer, under the influence of this divine principle, can no more withhold his obedience than the waters of our mighty rivers can withhold their tribute to the ocean; or the flame cease to ascend towards the sun. If therefore, a person should profess to have experienced grace, and a correspondent love to Christ, on account of this grace, and yet refuse to comply with the commands of Christ, clearly pointed out in his word, should we not be ready to doubt the reality of his conversion? We are told that "obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The truly humbled soul will seek to know the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures and, when understood, it will be the governing principle of his life. When, therefore, we behold a person coming forward to the Church of Christ, professing to have experienced converting grace, and expressing a desire to submit to the ordinances of the gospel, we are bound to think favorably of him, particularly, if his life correspond with this profession. But, perhaps, some may be ready to say, may not these things be counterfeited? We answer, yes:—If there was no genuine currency there would be no counterfeit coin. In the days of the Apostles there were impostors. Simon Magus was baptized, who notwithstanding, was told by Peter, that he was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Impostors still intrude themselves into the Church of Christ; hence the necessity of vigilance, on the part of the Church,

and a strict inquiry into the life and character of candidates, as well as into their religious experience. We shall now proceed to the consideration of the next qualification essentially requisite for membership with the visible Churches of Jesus Christ, viz.

5th.—Love to the people of God. The Apostle John assures us that, “Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” And again, “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” Here, you observe, that the Apostle makes love to the brethren the criterion of our having passed from a state of nature, in which we are also represented as being in a state of moral death, into a state of grace, with which spiritual life is connected. The Apostle also represents it as a divine command, in which love to the people of God is connected with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, “And this is his commandment,” saith he, “That we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” Now, to obey the commandment of God, we must act faith in his Son, without which, as we have already shewn, we cannot be the children of God; and if we be his children we must love those who believe in Christ. We shall only add, that the divine Redeemer himself has directed us to love one another, thereby manifesting, not only to the Church of Christ, but also to the world, that we are his disciples; “By this,” said he, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another. Whenever, therefore, a person has professed to have experienced renewing grace, we should notice, particularly, whether he delights more in the society of the children of God than in the society of the world—whether he has come out from among the people of the world, forsaking their vain and sinful customs and manners, and whether he takes delight in those duties, which constitute the happiness of God’s people, and if, while in their company, his conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ.

We shall now proceed—

Secondly, to shew how these qualifications are to be manifested to the Church by applicants for membership.

It will, no doubt, be readily granted that the human family are not all equally gifted, or blest with the same calm, collected mind and government of their passions. Some possess a happy talent for communicating their ideas; others are slow of speech and destitute of any regular method for arranging their ideas; some possess great self command; such are therefore, able to repress their feelings and, on the most trying occasions, manifest great composure of mind; others are of a quick sensibility, and extremely delicate feelings, which are easily excited, and which can only be vented by a flood of tears. Whenever this is the case, the utterance is choaked, and a solemn pause ensues. From this cause many, especially females, are prevented, for a length of time, if not altogether, from making application for membership with the visible Church.

From this diversity in the temperament of the human mind, the Church of Christ ought to make a difference among persons applying

for membership. We, therefore, beg leave to observe that application to the Church may be made through the following mediums, viz.

1st. By a personal application and verbal relation of the work of grace on the heart.

2d. To the Pastor of the Church ; or, where there is no Pastor, to the Deacons ; or to a Minister, who may act as a supply, and through them to the Church.

3d. By letter, or a written account of their sentiments and exercise.

First. By a personal application, and verbal relation of their experience and faith—

Those who have a talent for communicating their ideas readily and possess self-command, ought to appear before the Church and give a relation of God's gracious dealings with them, with " meekness and fear." Their language ought to be, " Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul." Being taught by the Spirit of God, and having strength imparted to them, according to the divine promise, " As the day is thy strength shall be ;"—and again, " My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness ;" such can, with holy confidence, make a declaration of their faith in Christ before the people of God. This has been the usual manner of receiving candidates into our Churches, of which we highly approve, and from which we ought not to depart, except under the circumstances which we have already noticed. By this manner of receiving candidates, the Church is more apt to be satisfied with their experiences, and has a better opportunity for proposing questions, not only relative to their exercises of mind ; but also with respect to their views of gospel doctrines and of gospel ordinances. Very frequently also, the hearts of God's children are enlivened and warmed by the relation of his gracious dealings with those who were once afar from God ; but have been brought near unto himself by the blood of the everlasting covenant : and as face answereth to face in water, so, very frequently, does the experience of a candidate, and that of the Church members exactly correspond. This produces an union of soul and sweet fellowship between them.

Secondly, To the Pastor of the Church, or, where there is no Pastor, to the Deacons of the Church ; or to a Minister who may act as a supply ; and through them to the Church—

Those who may not be possessed of that confidence, or talent for speaking before a number of persons, may be indulged with privately communicating their Christian experience to the Pastor of the Church. Indeed, from the Scriptures it appears, that the Ministers of the Gospel, in the infancy of the Church, were principally concerned in examining, as well as baptizing those who wished to be united to the visible Church of Jesus Christ. This duty, in a great measure, still devolves on them, even when they appear before the Church. If, therefore, the Pastor of the Church be the principal person concerned, in the examination of candidates, and if he be deemed faithful, why may he not be trusted to examine them privately, when they may enjoy more liberty, and he have a better opportunity of making

inquiries respecting the origin and progress of the work of grace on the heart, and also of their knowledge of the great and essential doctrines of the gospel? If he be satisfied with them, he may then report favorably respecting them to the Church, and give as far as he may recollect a particular account of their experience. The Church may then, if they please, make any inquiries, of the candidates, which they deem necessary, and receive them or not at their pleasure.— But should a Minister not be satisfied with the candidates, though he may, and ought, to give them salutary advice; yet he ought not to bring them before the Church. This mode of procedure would save the Church much unnecessary trouble. In like manner, when there is no Pastor, the Deacons, who ought also to be faithful and experienced men, should pursue the same line of conduct towards any, who may be diffident of their ability to speak before the Church. Should the candidate or candidates, prefer giving an account of the Lord's gracious dealings with them, to a Minister, who acts as a supply, we think that the same indulgence should be granted, always remembering that the Church must, through these mediums, receive the experience of the candidates. We perceive no impropriety, neither does it appear inconsistent with the Scriptures, that this mode of procedure should be tolerated in our Churches.

Thirdly. By letter, or a written account of faith and experience.— This to such as have a talent for writing, is the most easy, familiar and correct method of communication: females particularly, who from the great diffidence, and tender sensibilities of their nature, are frequently prevented from communicating with clearness and precision their exercises of mind before the Church, might thus do it with ease and satisfaction. In most Churches, great allowance has been made for their natural timidity, and their experience, for the most part, has been obtained by interrogatories. Now, as we consider it most proper for those who are candidates for admission, into the visible Church of Jesus Christ, to go through the relation of their christian experience, before any questions are asked, and as this cannot be done, where great timidity and sensibility are excited, we think that persons of this character, particularly females, may, with consistency, be indulged with communicating the Lord's dealings with them by writing. This method, after all, is precisely the same, in substance, as though they had verbally related their experience before the Church, with this difference, viz. that the epistolary form would ordinarily, we conceive, be more clear, circumstantial and correct. In fact, this method appears both reasonable and just. The Church may, and ought to interrogate the candidates for membership, when information has not been full, and should receive or, reject them, according to the evidence given of a gracious change of heart, or the contrary appears; always having regard to an exemplary life, for some length of time previous to their appearance before them; or from the time conversion is professed.

We have thus, beloved brethren, endeavoured to answer the question proposed, as the subject of the Circular Address: How far we have succeeded in the attempt, rests with you to determine. Having;

we fear, trespassed on your patience, we shall now conclude with our earnest prayer for your spiritual and everlasting happiness, and remain

Your affectionate brothers in gospel bonds,

RICHARD FURMAN, *Moderator.*
JOSEPH B. COOK, *Clerk.*

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